



The Daemon Initiative



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Chapter 1 by Mikey

The man sat in the fire's light, And it sat with him.

The fire crackled and snapped with the dry branches and timber that the man could find near the decaying road. Now the man sat in what was once a gas station, the name long faded from its sun bleached sign. It now lay fallen in sand and rocks as white as it.

Beyond the sound of the fire the man could hear the desert coming to life. Every night near dusk he could see rocks begin to stir, small creatures crawl from holes, and even large animals prowling the cooling sands. Most animals were immune allowing them to thrive.

Following the plague that swept through most of the civilized world disaster held tight to the entirety of the human race. Nuclear power plants were taken down as quick as the dying government could, but some still could not be stopped from exploding. It is not all that uncommon to find a place completely devoid of life, or even worse, thriving with mutated monstrosities.

No job could be done to completion. No city could be completely evacuated, not every stockpile was emptied of death dealing tools, and not even every zoo could be cleansed of life. And it was these zoos that have become the second largest problem to the man's survival. Even over the fire's quiet noise and its constant chatter he could hear a pack of hyenas laughing their haunting laugh. Searching for a meal.

Should they come for the man he would be prepared. His whetstone ground down to a point

from its routine use. His short knife also felt the wear and tear of use. The blade almost half of its original width. The man's other hand felt the strain. He would need to find new ones soon, lest he be left with nothing but his hands and himself with

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He would find something in Odessa. The city was all but abandoned by people. There will be plenty of corpses of civilians, scavengers, and soldiers to find. The man had little to go on besides that the city had been abandoned quickly. Most people were not able to reach evacuation and left to die by the rest. That meant he could be walking into a ruin or a gold mine.

Rumors said that the place was teeming with weapons and other valuables. Although few have escaped to tell of it. And those who do vow they would rather die than return to that dead city. The man has heard these rumors first hand. And he saw real fear in their eyes. Fear of death and pain. The man cared little of life, so how much more hellish could death be?

As the man begin to lay down to find sleep, It as usual made comments his decisions. It is rare that It condoned his actions, yet this time It wholeheartedly agreed that he should rest.

"Should you insist on continuing this fruitless venture of finding treasure in a dead city then you might as well be rested and ready for ANYTHING we shall find in there."

Chapter 2 by Mikey



Dawn's light drove the man from his sleep. And It was waiting for him to wake up.

"Good morning. Shall we be on our way?"

The man knew better than to argue for a morning meal. It liked to keep moving as much as they could. It refused to tell him why.

Gathering up his pack the man continued along the road. A large green that lays on the ground marked the road as Interstate 20. Right next to the small barely visible shield, was an equally barely visible 'Odessa 10 Miles'.

Not long until he reached the city. Not long until he had what he needed.

"I know what you want. And you'll never be rid of me."

Nothing is for certain. It taught him that

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The man has been nothing if not determined. It will not be easy, but the man will have it out of his head. Or die trying.

Cresting a ridge the man spots what used to be a neighborhood. Some kind of Suburb outside of Odessa. Many of the houses have fallen in on themselves. Simply husks of their former selves. Yet some still stand, sturdy and defiant of the elements.

Walking along the cracked streets between the decaying homes the man smelled a scent that he often caught on his travels. Death. It was faint, yet still there. This was fresh death. Something large had died nearby. The man shifted his long coat. Its bottom swishing around his knees. Thin armored plates weighing it down. The armor did little to stop anything larger than small caliber and knives, but it was still greater protection than most had.

It was quiet, sensing the same danger that the man felt coming from this dead land. It was taking in every detail that could be seen, heard, or felt.

"I count four. No firearms, one has a machete. They appear to be malnourished so this should be short. They're over there, sitting in the ruins of that old house on the corner."

And just as it had said there the man could see four thin dangerous looking men staring back at him. The man knew the look in their eyes. He had the sight that only a veteran of this land could have. And his instincts told him that the men held desperation in their eyes.

The four men came screaming from their hiding spot. The one with the machete came first, followed by three carrying an assortment of old sticks.

Machete tried to swing down with a large overhead blow, but was knocked over by a quick shove by the man. The man then turned his attention to the three grunts. Now there was something new in their eyes. Fear. Seeing their leader so easily knocked to the ground is no easy thing to watch.

Yet still one charged. The brave grunt brought a fast, sideways swing towards the man's torso.

Catching the old 2x4 on his side the man kicked out the grunt's leg, forcing him to leave his weapon in the hands of the man. The man took a moment to rest his hand on broken bones, but the

bruises will come, and they will heal.

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Rearing back the man brought his fist down on the grunt's shoulder. The old stick finally shattered in a spray of wood chips and splinters. The grunt fell down on what

was left of the street. His shoulder out of place, and splinters across his back.

Machete stood, and seeing one of his men down, brought out his last resort. Reaching behind his back Machete drew an ugly old revolver. Its frame covered in rust. If that thing actually fired the man might start believing in miracles.

But miracles were for another day, for when Machete pulled the gun's decrepit trigger, it blew up in his grinning face. Old guns don't work the way they should. It was common fact in the new world.

With the man's back turned another one of the grunts tried to hit him over the head. Back stepping the man threw a hand down and grabbed the grunt's skinny ankle, ripping the malnourished man off his feet. He landed with a sickening crunch on the pavement.

Turning towards his last assailant the man saw him running back towards the old, burned out house.

"Go you fool follow him! We must keep our destination a secret!"

The man agreed. When the fleeing man reached the house he jumped down and seemed to disappear. When he got closer the man saw there was an old set of concrete steps heading down into a basement.

Drawing a small 9mm pistol and a flashlight the man went down into the unknown. Determined to keep himself safe from future harm. Scanning the dank hole the man saw that the basement had begun to fall in on itself. The walls and ceiling bowed in as if something were trying to crush the man.

The basement had noticeably more beds than men he fought outside. Boxes and a small table were pushed over to one corner. On the table was another machete and a whetstone. Pocketing the superior sharpening tool the man turned his attention to a door near the opposite side of the room.

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The man dropped to a knee and shoved his shoulder into the attacker's lower stomach. Then he threw him over his shoulder onto the hard stone floor. Turning his focus back on the door the man saw no more threats. Inside were sickly and frail men, women, and children.

That was life in this hell. You were either strong or you died. These people were on the edge of the worse half of that.

"Don't hurt them." The man heard from behind him. He turned back to see the frail man laying on the ground.

The man turned back and picked up his flashlight and walked back to the steps. Before climbing up he spoke to the dying people.

"I'd hurry up and go help your friends. They shouldn't be dead yet."

With that he walked up the stairs and down the street towards where his treasure lie.

"You should have just killed them." It spoke.

"It didn't need to be done." the man retorted quickly.

"They may try to come after us."

"And they may not."

"When I say you should do something you know its the best option." The man did not respond.

"I'm looking out for you because I'm looking out for myself as well. You would do well to remember that Sean."

"Do not say that name." The man snapped back. It did not respond.

Rare silence followed the man as he walked along the cracked road through a dead world.

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